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ABSTRACT

A study created a typology of 271 adult literacy programs nationwide describing their distribution along two dimensions: (1) relevance of materials to learner needs and sociocultural context (life-contextual/decontextual), and (2) extent of learner control of decisions about program activities (dialogic/monologic). A questionnaire elicited information regarding program structure, model followed, program and student goals, learning materials, students' influence on decisions about course content and classroom activities, success measurement, and student population demographics. Program responses were coded along two dimensions reflecting how life-contextualized and how dialogic the literacy work was judged to be. A two-dimensional grid was created: one axis reflected the continuum of life-contextual to life-decontextual, the other the continuum of dialogic to monologic. The four quadrants were dialogic/life-contextual, dialogic/life-decontextual, monologic/life-decontextual, and monologic/life-contextual. The four sections of the life-contextual/life-decontextual axis were subdivided into highly life-contextual, somewhat life-contextual, somewhat life-decontextual, and highly life-contextual. The four sections of the dialogic axis became highly dialogic, somewhat dialogic, somewhat monologic, and highly monologic. Findings indicated that 73 percent of programs fell within the dimensional space of life-decontextual/monologic, that is, they used activities and materials not related to students' lives and were teacher directed and controlled rather than collaborative. (Contains 38 references.) (YLB)

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NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

"U.S. ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM PRACTICE: A TYPOLOGY ACROSS DIMENSIONS OF LIFE-CONTEXTUALIZED/DECONTEXTUALIZED AND DIALOGIC/MONOLOGIC"

by

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Harvard Graduate School of Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Describing Program Practice: A Typology Across Two Dimensions

This study created a typology of adult literacy programs across the United States that describes the distribution of programs along two dimensions: relevance of materials, referred to as life-contextual/decontextual; and control of decisions, referred to as dialogic/monologic. This information provides a data-based description of the array of adult literacy program models currently operating. Of the 271 adult literacy programs participating, 73 percent can be described as using activities and materials that are not related to their students' lives and as teacher directed and controlled rather than collaborative.

Theoretical Background for Dimensions

The two dimensions—life-contextual/decontextual and dialogic/monologic—were chosen because of the possible relationship between these dimensions of adult literacy instruction and the increased use of print in the actual lives of participants over time. The life-contextual/decontextual dimension describes how much program content and materials reflect the specific needs and sociocultural context of the learner with regard to real-life literacy functions. In other words, how relevant are the content and materials to the learners' lives? This dimension was chosen as a program feature to document because this distinction appears to be important in light of research that has found that students learn most efficiently when instructional materials reflect and incorporate their prior experience. Adult literacy students have a limited amount of time for attending classes and studying, and want skills that they can use in the context of their lives.

The dialogic/monologic dimension reflects the extent of involvement the learner has in making decisions about the activities of the classroom and the program. This dimension was chosen as a feature to document based on studies that have shown that student learning is enhanced when students are active partners involved in making decisions about their educational programs.

Conclusions

While typing programs on the basis of a one-page, nine-question questionnaire has validity problems, this study is a first attempt to systematically document the distribution of certain descriptive features of adult literacy programs in the U.S. Most of the responding programs were judged to be more life-

decontextualized and monologic. Despite calls from adult educators for more programs rooted in the realities, expertise, and interests of the learners, only a small percentage of programs now in operation and captured by this study display those characteristics.

U.S. ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM PRACTICE: A TYPOLOGY ACROSS DIMENSIONS OF LIFE-CONTEXTUALIZED/DECONTEXTUALIZED AND DIALOGIC/MONOLOGIC

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to create a typology of adult literacy programs across the United States in order to (a) begin to sort out and describe the multitude of adult literacy programs currently in operation and (b) map out and locate types of programs in preparation for a subsequent study of possible relationships between program characteristics and changes in home literacy use/culture.

The typology used for this study was based on two dimensions: learner life-contextualized/decontextualized and dialogic/monologic. The first dimension was used to categorize adult literacy programs according to how much program content and materials reflect the specific needs and sociocultural context of the learner. The second dimension was used to categorize programs according to how involved the learner is in the decision-making with regard to the activities of the literacy program. We hypothesize that where a program falls along these two dimensions could be associated with changes in literacy practices within the home environment, a hypothesis that will guide the subsequent study (Purcell-Gates, 1996b).

There have been various calls for a description of adult literacy programs (Wagner & Venezky, 1995). While increased attention is being given adult literacy issues by the public and funding agencies, there are currently so many different programs, serving so many different populations, that it is very difficult to know which programs are teaching what, where, to whom, and for what purposes. Creating typologies of adult literacy programs will allow for a more systematic means of categorizing programs according to what is currently believed to be the best practices in adult literacy. This will, in turn, allow for the much needed process of constructing a coherent theory and practice of adult literacy education to replace the current collection of divergent methodologies and perspectives (Hayes & Snow, 1989).

Adult literacy programs could be typed along a number of relevant dimensions, and we make no claim that those used for this typology are the only, the most relevant, or even the most important dimensions one could use. We

chose the dimensions of life-contextualized/decontextualized and dialogic/monologic because of our interest in the possible relationships between these dimensions of adult literacy programs and increased use of print in the actual lives of the participants over time.

Adults who attend literacy programs are assumed to experience difficulties with reading and writing some or nearly all print that occurs in and mediates life's activities for people in literate societies. Thus, it can further be assumed that these adults do not read or write as much, across a range of text complexity, as do fully literate adults (Purcell-Gates, 1996a). This affects more than the adult. Children within the homes of these adults do not experience the many and varied uses of print to the same extent as the children of fully literate parents. This has a profound effect on the children's own literacy development both during the crucial emergent literacy years and also as they experience formal literacy instruction in school (Purcell-Gates, 1996a; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Taylor, 1979; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

Given the above, our hypothesis carries a family literacy/social systems implication (Auerbach, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Purcell-Gates, 1996b): adults who learn to read and write through activities that they choose, and that are more authentic and relevant to their lives outside of the classroom, may increase the number of different contexts within which they will read and write in their daily lives, homes, and communities.

THEORETICAL FRAME

This study is framed by a theory of language learning whereby learners develop their understandings of language systems through experience, by using language in interaction with others within specified cultural and social contexts (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 1992; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). This is true for written language development as well as oral language development. Thus, the guiding definition of literacy used for this research is that of cultural practice (Gee, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 1993, 1996). This view of literacy recognizes that issues of power and access are inherent in literacy practice and thus is an ideological model. This stands in contrast to autonomous models of literacy, which have been described as viewing literacy practice in a vacuum (Street, 1989). Literacy practices do not take place in socially neutral settings, and studies of literacy need to include the various uses of literacy and the distributions of literacy practices. Methods of literacy instruction reflect both the contextual nature of learning and the power

relations between teacher and student.

RELEVANT RESEARCH: DIMENSIONS FOR TYPOLOGY

Life-Contextual/Life-Decontextual Dimension

As noted by Lytle (1994), adult literacy programs differ "in their emphasis on teaching predetermined sets of skills or, alternately, in building the literacy practices of everyday life" (p. 5). This is reflected in the contents of adult literacy textbooks, which range from life skills and problem solving to phonics and word family drills. For this report, literacy work grounded in the life of the student outside of the classroom was considered life-contextual. This is in keeping with the definition of language use and literacy practice as socially-situated dialogues (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 1992; Street, 1989).

The distinction between life-contextual and life-decontextual appears to be important in light of research that has found students to learn most efficiently when instructional materials reflect and incorporate students' prior experiences (Fingeret, 1991). Classroom activities using generative themes taken from the lives of adult learners have been seen to facilitate their acquisition of literacy (Freire, 1992). This perspective recognizes that adult learners have a wealth of experience from which to draw (Freire, 1992; Office of Technological Assistance, 1993). Given their many responsibilities (as parents and/or workers), adult literacy students have a limited amount of time for attending classes and studying. These students desire skills that they can use in the current contexts of their lives (Freire, 1992; Office of Technological Assistance, 1993) and often express a desire to use materials geared towards their day-to-day experience as adults and parents (Nwakeze & Seiler, 1993).

The use of life-context-specific materials and activities in adult literacy programs is supported by research that documents the powerful role of context in learning. For example, workplace literacy programs teach literacy skills as they are needed within specific work contexts. Compared to programs that concentrated on a more "general" literacy, adult programs that incorporated job-related materials were associated with larger increases in both job-related and general literacy (Sticht, 1989). Other studies have found that much of the growth made by participants in general literacy programs is likely to be lost if recently learned skills are not applied to (and thus practiced in) real-life situations (Brizius & Foster, 1987). Transferring skills between contexts, however, is extremely difficult and rarely accomplished by learners to the degree often assumed by

educators (NCAL, 1994).

However, the concept of "life-contextual" can actually be decontextualized in ways that reduce the effectiveness of its inclusion in adult literacy programs. Once activities and materials are mass produced and mass prescribed, they become increasingly distanced—or decontextualized—from the lives of individual students. Given the diversity of life situations among adult learners, this could easily happen in the adult literacy classroom. For example, a thematic unit centered around the use of checkbooks—considered a "real life" activity mediated by print by most middle-class people—would not be contextually relevant for students who do not have checking accounts, have never had checking accounts, and have no realistic plans for opening checking accounts in the near future (Lerche, 1985).

One way some practitioners avoid this inappropriate use of life-contextualized activities/materials is to respond to their individual students' literacy needs and elicit student-generated, student-provided, or student-requested texts. Hunter and Harman (1985) found that "maximum use" (p. 69) of this type of material was associated with higher levels of student achievement. Other researchers have documented that student writing based on their own lives has been associated with increases in writing skills (Stasz, Schwartz, & Weeden, 1994; D'Annunzio, 1994).

Dialogic/Monologic Dimension

Dialogic educational practice is that which includes the student as a participant and partner in the goals, activities, and procedures of the class and program. This is in contrast to the more typical practice wherein students cede authority and power to the teacher (or underlying program structure) for decisions regarding their learning. Freire (1992) refers to this type of education as a "banking" model of education, where the student is the passive recipient of the teacher's knowledge. This retains the students' object status, according to Freire, and precludes real learning or any significant changes in the lives of the students. To be truly liberatory, Freire maintains, "education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p. 53).

There has been little research with regard to the influence of the structure of literacy instruction on students' acquisition of literacy (Lytle, 1994). However, this distinction between dialogic and monologic appears to be important for more than political or philosophical reasons. Studies have shown that students'

learning is enhanced when they are active partners (Office of Technological Assistance, 1993) involved in decision making about their education program (Brizius & Foster, 1987). Fingeret (1991) notes that curriculum development is tantamount to teaching, and curriculum development/teaching depends upon a knowledge of students' cultures. In dialogic practice, instructors can be educated by their students about the students' culture and history. Given the variety of cultures, many of them nonmainstream and/or immigrant, from which adult education students come, becoming educated about their students' cultures and histories may be a crucial element in adult education teaching in the United States at this time (NCAL, 1995).

METHOD

Participants

A total of 271 adult literacy programs, distributed across the United States, are represented in this study. Programs were considered for inclusion in the study if a major focus of their work was literacy for adult students. A wide variety of programs were considered, e.g., adult literacy classes, individual tutoring, English as a Second Lanugage (ESL) literacy programs, workplace literacy programs, family literacy programs, library-based programs, and prison education programs. Given the criteria, family literacy programs that focused solely on the literacy needs of the students' children, and ESL programs that focused mainly on oral (rather than written) skills were not included.

Responses from programs in 42 states comprise the data pool. Geographically, 18% of the responses came from National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Region 1, representing New York, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Delaware, Washington, DC, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the responses came from programs in NIFL Region 2, representing Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the responses came from NIFL Region 3, representing Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, North Dakota, and Minnesota. Thirty percent (30%) came from NIFL Region 4, representing Oregon, California, Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington. The remaining 3% comprised responses whose locations were not indicated on their returned questionnaires.

Program Sampling Procedures

Programs were solicited for participation in three stages. Initially, we searched the Internet for adult literacy programs with home pages. This was done in two ways. First, search engines were used, with the key words being "adult literacy" or "literacy program." Second, the National Institute for Literacy homepage was used to begin looking at individual state resource centers. Program names and lists by county and state were downloaded. A small number of programs were called, and six replied to the questionnaire over the phone. The small number of adult education programs with home pages limited this approach.

Next, copies of the questionnaire and letter explaining the project were posted on 10 adult education-related listservs. Subscribers to the listservs were asked to reply by e-mail to the questionnaire as a representative of an adult literacy program. Over 100 e-mail responses were received, with 69 judged as codable. The questionnaire and explanation were reposted two months after the initial posting. Responses that came from other countries (e.g., Canada, Australia) were collected but were not used in the final analysis.

The third means of data collection was in the form of questionnaires sent out via U.S. mail, in two different batches. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter explaining the project and a stamped return envelope. Lists of programs downloaded from state resource centers and from printed directories of adult literacy programs were divided into the four National Institute for Literacy regions (see above) and then randomly selected. The initial mailing consisted of 600 letters and questionnaires sent out, 150 to each of the four NIFL regions. A second mailing of 300 letters and questionnaires—75 to each of the four NIFL regions—was sent a month later. The total number of programs to which questionnaires were sent was 900, randomly selected from a total of 3,171.

In addition to these direct means of contact, programs were also encouraged to pass along the questionnaire to others they thought might be interested in participating. This was done on the Internet by forwarding the posting to others, by noting the research project in a program's newsletter, or by photocopied distribution.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was devised to elicit information about a program that would inform a holistic method of coding for the dimensions of interest. While many validity problems exist with questionnaire data, such as sampling bias, the

tendency to provide socially appropriate responses, and misinterpretation of individual items by the respondents, this method of data collection was deemed the only viable one given time and resource constraints. To attempt to deal with these validity issues, we employed several different techniques: (a) we kept the questionnaire short—limited to one page—to encourage response; (b) we devised individual questions that would allow us to triangulate the data we received; (c) we provided the participants with no explicit knowledge of the dimensions of interest. However, some responses to question #6 (see below) were "apologies" for not having "enough" student participation in given programs. This type of response might indicate that question #6 prompted socially-appropriate responses. However, these types of responses were relatively few, and we did not feel that the validity of the questionnaire as a whole was threatened.

The questionnaire contained the following nine questions, some of which had subquestions: (1) What is the structure of your program? Whole classes or individual tutoring? How often do classes meet? How many students do you serve? (2) Do you consciously follow a model? (e.g., Kenan, Freire, Laubach, etc.) (3) What are the explicit goals of your program? What are the students' goals? (4) What learning activities do you use in each class? Please give at least one example. (5) What materials do you use? What texts are your students reading and writing? (6) To what degree do students influence decisions about course content and classroom activities? (7) How do you measure the success of your program? (8) How are you funded? (9) Can you characterize the demographics of your student population?

Coding

Program responses were coded along the two dimensions reflecting how life-contextualized the literacy work was judged to be and how dialogic the program was judged to be. As a research team, we created a two-dimensional grid to aid in coding and in managing the data. One axis of the grid reflected the continuum of life-contextual to life-decontextual, and the other reflected the continuum of dialogic to monologic. This created four quadrants: dialogic/life-contextual; dialogic/life-decontextual; monologic/life-decontextual; and monologic/life-contextual.

After an initial round of coding, the team subdivided each of the axes into four parts. The four sections of the life-contextual/life-decontextual axis became highly life-contextual; somewhat life-contextual; somewhat life-decontextual; and highly life-decontextual. The four sections of the dialogic axis became highly dialogic; somewhat dialogic; somewhat monologic; and highly monologic. This

created 16 subdivisions (see Figure 1 below) and allowed for sharper differentiation between programs. For example, programs that were judged to be equally dialogic, yet appeared to differ in how life-contextualized their literacy work was, could be coded separately.

Coding took into account all of the answers of a program, and where there was not enough information or where the information provided did not allow for coding, requests were made for further information. Responses that remained ambiguous were dropped from the study. A total of 337 programs responded to the questionnaire out of which 66 responses were judged to be not codable. While all of the information provided by the respondents was taken into account for the holistic coding, information regarding the life-contextualized/life-decontextualized dimension was primarily gathered from questions 2, 4, and 5. Information regarding the dialogic/monologic dimension was primarily gathered from questions 2, 3, and 6.

To aid in data management and to track responses by dimension and by geographical representation of programs, an enlarged version of the dimensions grid and a large map of the United States were maintained in the research office. Responses were noted on each of these with pushpins, color-coded for each of the four main quadrants in the grid. Each research assistant also maintained a version of the dimensions grid, noting the location of the responses they had coded.

Reliability of Coding

After the group coding was found to be consistent, the two research assistants began to code responses individually. At each weekly meeting, the research assistants would present a selection of responses and check with the group for reliability in coding decisions. A final interrater reliability check on 100 responses randomly selected from 271 responses yielded a Pearson-Product Moment r=.79.

Operational Definitions of Dimensional Spaces for Coding

The quadrants (see Figure 1 below) reflected how programs could be typed along the two different continuums. The first continuum, along the x-axis, measured how contextualized or decontextualized to the learners' lives a program is. There were four degrees of contexualization: highly life-contextualized, somewhat life-contextualized, somewhat life-decontextualized, and highly life-decontextualized. The second continuum, along the y-axis, measured how monologic or dialogic a program was. There were four degrees of this continuum,

as well: highly dialogic, somewhat dialogic, somewhat monologic, and highly monologic. The following descriptions explain what we would expect to see from each of the different degrees along each axis:

Life-Contextual/Life-Decontextual Axis (x-axis):

Highly life-contextualized: Programs that use no skill books, have no set curriculum, use realia, newspapers, journals, novels, work manuals, driver's license materials, etc. Programs are strongly focused on authentic materials that are relevant to the students' lives and reflect students' needs. Sample quotes from responses: "All authentic materials; newspaper and magazine articles, short stories, children's books, newsletters sent home from school" (from a Family Literacy Program). "No basic text. Individualized—basically use a Language Experience Approach" (from an ABE program).

Somewhat life-contextualized: Programs may mention skills and may use some published textbooks and workbooks, but student work is heavily concentrated on real-life texts and issues. "We use lots of life-based materials—newspapers, brochures, flyers. Also pre-GED books...and vocabulary books" (from an ABE program). "Writing using learners' lives. Wilson Language, Steck-Vaughn" (from an ABE program).

Somewhat life-decontextualized: Programs are more highly focused on skills, with the majority of activities focused on phonics work, grammar work, workbooks, etc. Materials tend to be published textbooks and workbooks, though some mention may be made of authentic materials or activities such as Language Experience Approach, newspapers, journals, etc. "Some Laubach workbooks; some Steck-Vaughn pre-GED prep workbooks. We prefer to use the real stuff when it's available but usually in concert with an existing teaching tool" (one-on-one volunteer program). "Trained tutors follow instructions in guides...Laubach instructional materials; a large source of Biblical instructional materials with Bibles and reference books rewritten at 4th grade level" (ABE program).

Highly life-decontextualized: Programs have a set curriculum with a focus on skills, phonics, flashcards, etc. Most, if not all, materials are from publishers, and there is almost no mention at all of authentic materials or activities. "We use the video tapes produced by Scottish Rite Hospital (Orton-Gillingham) as well as corresponding teacher workbooks and student workbooks. Also use manipulatives such as plastic letters of the alphabet" (ABE program). "Phonetic drill on cassette tape, drill with instructor, reading word lists, sentences and stories, spelling practice..." (ABE program).

Dialogic/Monologic Axis (y-axis):

Highly dialogic: Programs where students work with teachers to create the course, choose the materials, activities, etc. Students are also involved in all aspects of the program, may serve on the board, make decisions regarding meeting times, class rules, class structure, and location, etc. Students may also work to publish newsletters and in recruiting new students. These programs may mention Freire as a model. Sample quotes from responses: "Specific readings/topics are determined by individual classes and are primarily generated from parents' suggestions" (from a Family Literacy Program). "Students are the primary decision makers" (from an ABE program).

Somewhat dialogic: Programs where student input is critical. Students work with teachers to create curriculum, to plan study, etc. There is total collaboration in choosing course content and activities. Students are in charge of their own learning. These programs may mention Freire as a model. Sample quotes from responses: "We have no specific textbooks. We draw from many sources and follow the lead of the participants' needs in planning curriculum" (from an ABE program). "At the end of each session, students evaluate the instructor, the materials, and class activities" (from an ABE program).

Somewhat monologic: Programs where students' goals, interests, and/or needs are taken into account when creating course content. Students have some input into class content, usually in the form of interest inventories, students' goals, or IEPs. Teachers encourage student input. Students typically choose from materials and activities that have already been selected by the teacher. Programs in this category consider themselves to be client-driven, although ultimate course decisions typically rest with the teachers. Teachers give needs assessments throughout the students' time in the program. Teachers and students periodically reflect on goals and whether or not the program is meeting them. Sample quotes from responses: (Program described as student-centered) "Participatory... but students don't regularly make suggestions" (from a Family Literacy Program). "Classes are designed to meet students' individual needs—identified by counselors and teachers' meetings with students" (from an ABE program).

Highly monologic: Programs where students have little or no input into course content, activities, or materials. Students may be given a needs analysis when they start the program but needs are not continually reevaluated. These programs may say that the demographics of the students impact course content. Sample quotes from responses: "A needs analysis is done in each class and teachers plan content and activities accordingly" (from an ABE program for

women). "We follow curriculum recommended by the state Education Department" (from an ABE program).

RESULTS

By far, the majority of the programs, as described on the returned questionnaires, fell within the dimensional space of life-decontextualized/ monologic (see Table 1). A total of 73% of the programs (n=197) were judged to consist of activities and materials that were somewhat or highly decontextualized from the out-of-classroom lives of the students, and these programs were somewhat to highly teacher-directed. Programs judged as life-contextual and teacher-directed comprised the next most common dimensional category with 17% (n=45). This was followed by the dimensional space of life-contextual/ dialogic to which 8% (n=23) of the responding programs were assigned. The

Table 1 *Breakdown of adult literacy programs by type and sub-type*

Type of Program	*n*	% of total
Life-Contextual/Dialogic	**23**	**8**
Highly Contextual/Highly Dialogic	3	1
Somewhat Contextual/Highly Dialogic	0	0
Highly Contextual/Somewhat Dialogic	2	1
Somewhat Contextual/Somewhat Dialogic	18	7
Life-Decontextual/Dialogic	**6**	**2**
Somewhat Decontextual/Highly Dialogic	0	0
Highly Decontextual/Highly Dialogic	0	0
Somewhat Decontextual/Somewhat Dialogic	4	1
Highly Decontextual/Somewhat Dialogic	2	1
Life-Contextual/Monologic	**45**	**17**
Highly Contextual/Somewhat Monologic	4	1
Somewhat Contextual/Somewhat Monologic	38	17
Highly Contextual/Highly Monologic	0	0
Somewhat Contextual/Highly Monologic	3	1
Life-Decontextual/Monologic	**197**	**73**
Somewhat Decontextual/Somewhat Monologic	68	25
Highly Decontextual/Somewhat Monologic	56	21
Somewhat Decontextual/Highly Monologic	19	7
Highly Decontextual/Highly Monologic	54	20
Total	**271**	**100**

Note: Due to rounding of percentages, the program sub-types total more than 100%.

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fewest number of programs fell within the life-decontextualized/dialogic dimensional space. Only 2% (n=6) were judged to consist of somewhat to highly life-decontextualized activities/materials with student participation in choosing these activities and materials.

Within each dimensional quadrant, different patterns emerged. Within the life-contextual/dialogic quadrant, 1% (n=3) of the overall total was judged as both highly life-contextualized and highly dialogic, whereas no program was described as somewhat life-contextualized and highly dialogic. But 1% (n=2) of the overall total was judged as highly life-contextualized and somewhat dialogic. The majority of the programs falling within this quadrant, though, were placed closer to the overall middle as somewhat life-contextualized and somewhat dialogic (7%, n=18, of the overall total).

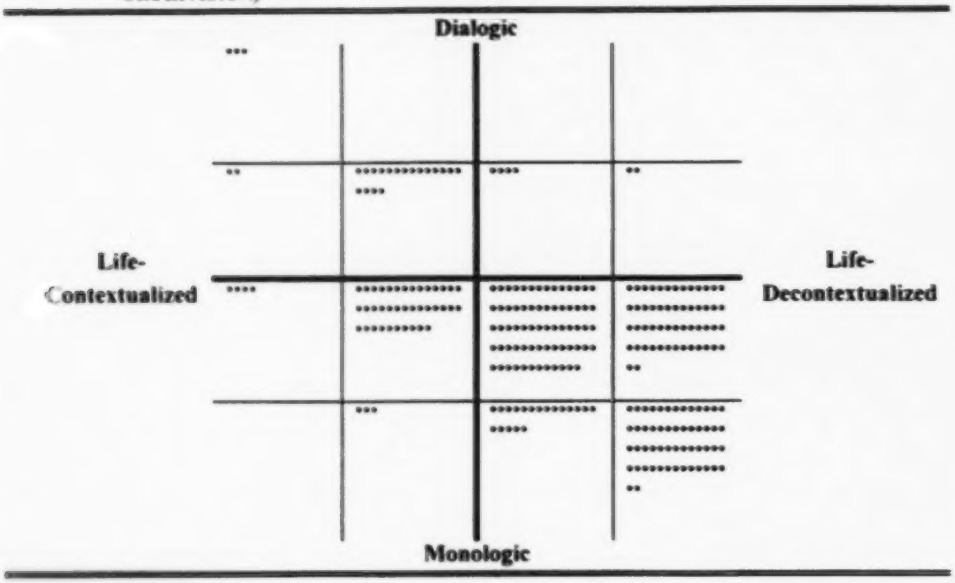
The life-decontextual/dialogic quadrant, with the fewest overall assignments, contained no programs described as highly dialogic. The degree to which the programs reflected life-decontextualized activities was split, with 1% (n=4) of the overall total assigned as somewhat life-decontextual and 1% (n=2) judged as highly life-decontextual.

The majority of the programs assigned to the life-contextual/monologic quadrant were judged to be somewhat life-contextual and somewhat monologic with 14% of the overall total (n=38). Only 1% (n=4) of the overall total was described as highly life-contextual and somewhat monologic, and 1% (n=3) of the overall total was judged to be somewhat life-contextual and highly monologic. No responses were coded as highly life-contextual and highly dialogic.

The life-decontextual/monologic quadrant, where the majority of the programs fell, contained a more even assignment of programs. Those judged to be somewhat life-decontextual and somewhat monologic represented 25% (n=68) of the overall total. Those assigned to the highly life-decontextual and somewhat monologic category were 21% (n=56) of the overall total, and those assigned to the highly life-decontextual and highly monologic category represented 20% (n=54) of the overall total. The category of somewhat life-decontextual and highly monologic, though, contained only 7% (n=19) of the overall total. See Figure 1 for a dimensional view of this distribution of results.

Looking at the two dimensions separately, the dimension of dialogic/ monologic captured a different pattern of distribution in the described programs than did that of life-contextual/life-decontextual (see Table 2). The degree to which class activities reflect life realities for the participants moves increasingly

Figure 1 *Distribution of responses across the dimensional grid (location within a subdivision does not indicate differentiated placements within the subdivision)*



along the continuum from few that were highly life-contextualized to most that were highly life-decontextualized (highly life-contextualized: 3%, *n*=9; somewhat life-contextualized: 22%, *n*=59; somewhat life-decontextualized: 34%, *n*=91; highly life-decontextualized: 41%, *n*=112). However, the move along the dialogic/monologic continuum, from those programs described as highly dialogic

Table 2 *Distribution of Adult Literacy Programs Along the Life-Contextual/Life-Decontextual and Dialogic/Monologic Dimensions*

Dimension of Programs	*n*	% of total
Life-Contextual/Life-Decontextual		
Highly Life-Contextual	9	3
Somewhat Life- Contextual	59	22
Somewhat Life-Decontextual	91	34
Highly Life-Decontextual	112	41
Dialogic/Monologic		
Highly Dialogic	3	1
Somewhat Dialogic	26	10
Somewhat Monologic	166	61
Highly Monologic	76	28

to those described as highly monologic, is more curvilinear than linear (highly dialogic: 1%, *n*=3; somewhat dialogic: 10%, *n*=26; somewhat monologic: 61%, *n*=166; highly monologic: 28%, *n*=76).

Figures 2 and 3 graphically portray these one-dimensional distributions of the programs.

***Figure 2** Distribution of all responses along the life-contextualized/life-decontextualized continuum*

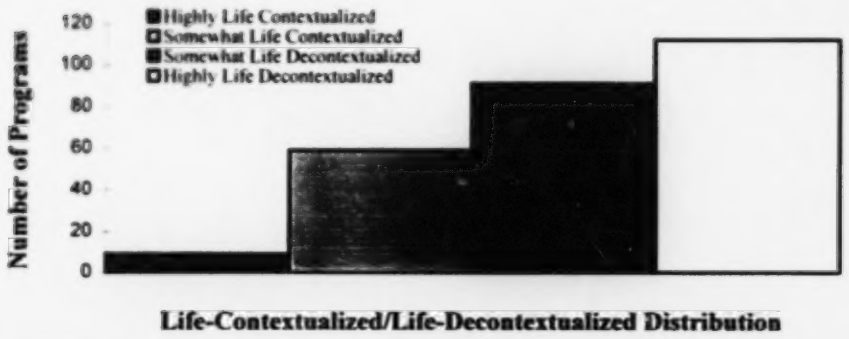
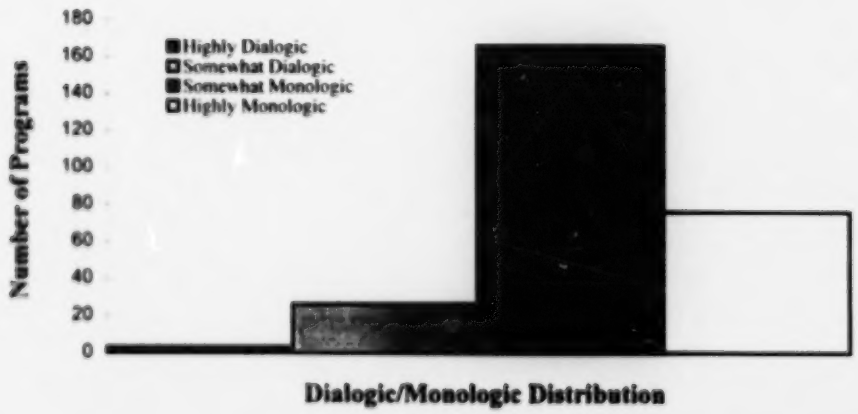


***Figure 3** Distribution of all responses along the dialogic/monologic continuum*



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DISCUSSION

Before we discuss these results we must acknowledge the limitations of this study. All of the decisions regarding the degree to which the programs reflected the dimensions of interest were limited to the responses on the questionnaires. We had no opportunity to visit any of these programs for more in-depth data collection such as interviewing and/or observation of classes. In addition, weaknesses in the questionnaire became apparent during the coding process but we had no opportunity to respond to these and collect data with a revised questionnaire. Finally, although we made a serious attempt to represent all adult literacy programs in the country through our sampling procedures, the results are limited to those programs with representatives who chose to reply. All discussion of the findings of this survey, and resulting typology, must be tempered with these limitations.

Within this, this study is the first to attempt to systematically document the distribution of some descriptive features of adult literacy programs in this country. The dimensions chosen by us for this typology are theoretically derived as potentially crucial to outcomes for participants in adult literacy programs. Thus, this typology has theoretical as well as practical potential for future studies.

This study was not designed to test the efficacy of different types of adult literacy programs. Rather, our purpose was only to describe the distributions of programs along the two dimensions of life-contextualized/life-decontextualized and dialogic/monologic. This information should be helpful to those theorists, researchers, and practitioners who may hold preconceived ideas about how widespread certain types of programs are, or about the scope of the challenge if they are concerned with changing the status quo. Further, for policy makers, funders, and others concerned with program outcomes, this study should inform as regards the variety in the nature of adult literacy programs and provide one basis for assessing most viable instructional models. At the very least, we have provided a data-based description of the array of adult literacy program models currently operating and providing services to millions of adults.

The fact that most of the responding programs were judged by us as more life-decontextualized and monologic is not particularly surprising. The model of literacy instruction wherein students are taught to read and to write from skills-based materials, and where the teacher is considered the expert and the director of this learning, is an old and deeply embedded one in this country. While this model has been seriously challenged in K-12 education with debates over authentic literacy activities and materials, and learner input and choice (Chall,

1996; Goodman, 1986), these debates have apparently resulted in fewer curricular changes in adult literacy programs. Despite calls from adult educators for more programs rooted in the life realities of the learners which draw on participants' expertise and interests (Auerbach, 1995; Fingeret, 1987; Freire, 1993), only a small percentage of programs now in operation, and captured by this study, reflect those characteristics.

Also not surprising, and perhaps a little comforting to those who worry about "extremism," is the fact that most of the programs clustered about the middle of the two-dimensional grid of characteristics. Apparently, many teachers and program directors of U.S. adult literacy programs feel the competing pulls of the two ends of the continuums represented in this study, and this is reflected in different aspects of their programs. Most of the programs that used materials and activities from the actual lives of the students retained some teacher control over how they were used, by whom, and when. And many of the programs that relied on prepublished adult literacy materials and skill books made some attempts to respond to the individual goals and needs of their students. Only a very few programs attempted to take Freirean theory to heart and create programs rooted in the lives of the participants and directed largely by their input and choices. It is worth noting, though, that many more programs fell into the opposite extreme corner of the two-dimensional grid. These programs were considered to be highly decontextualized and highly monologic. Students worked only with texts and materials written exclusively to teach isolated skills and that were assigned to them by teachers responding to assessments and to state or district guidelines.

By describing programs along hypothesized operative characteristics such as life-contextual/decontextual and dialogic/monologic, rather that the typical "models" approach (e.g., whole language, participatory, skills-based), we have captured how different instantiations of different models in different programs result in varying practices. We see, in our results, how, despite what labels programs may give themselves or how they position themselves vis-a-vis other programs, most of the programs positioned themselves around the center of our two-dimensional scheme of program characteristics. This lens, we believe, is more interesting, and informative, than ones that use, exclusively, a theoretical models approach.

These results will immediately inform a study on the relationships between program characteristics and change in out-of-classroom literacy activity by adult participants. Our hypothesis is that programs whose content centers around real life literacy events (or potential ones) in the lives of their students and whose content is reflective and respectful of the input and participation of the

participants will result in increased reading and writing in the lives of the students as compared to those that do not reflect these characteristics. However, it is absolutely possible that this hypothesis is either wrong, or simplistic, and that the programs that result in the most change in reading and writing by the students in their out-of-class lives will include a balance of life-contextualized and isolated skill work determined more by the teacher than by the students. With the results of this survey, we have a context for describing programs on these theoretically-derived dimensions.

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